

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3721

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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AMEMBASSY KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 1521

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: CONGRESS PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL APPOINTMENTS

1. CONGRESS PRESIDENT BAROOAH REVAMPED THE CONGRESS PARTY SECRETARIAT LAST WEEK. TWO OF THE FOUR AICC GENERAL SECRETARIES, P.V.N. RAO AND AZIZ IMAN, WERE DROPPED. MAHARASHTRA STATE MINISTER, A. N. ANTULAY, AND CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY PARTY (CPP) DEPUTY LEADER V. B. RAJU REPLACED THEM. FORMER M. P. CHIEF MINISTER, NOW UNION CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZER MINISTER, P. C. SETHI, REPLACED GOVERNOR OF KARNATAKA U.S. DIKSHIT AS CONGRESS PARTY TREASURER. BAROOAH ALSO FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS APPOINTED A NUMBER OF JOINT SECRETARIES: KARNATAKA RAJYA SABHA MEMBER MARGARET ALVA, RAJASTHAN LOK SABHA MP, N.K. SHARMA, AND ASSAM MP TARUN GOGOI.

2. COMMENT: OUR CONGRESS CONTACTS INTERPRET THE CHANGES AS AN INDICATION THAT THE PARTY MACHINERY IS BEING REORIENTED FOR ELECTION PURPOSES. THE APPOINTMENT OF JOINT SECRETARIES WIDENS THE SECRETARIAT'S
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PURVIEW. THE NEW INCUMBENTS REPRESENT VARIED COMMUNAL

AND REGIONAL INTERESTS. ALVA IS A CHRISTIAN, ANTULAY A MUSLIM, GOGOI A TRIBAL, SHARMA A BRAHMIN AND RAJU A BANIA. IT IS ALSO TRUE, HOWEVER, THAT NONE OF THE NEW APPOINTEES WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF RAJU HAVE REPUTATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY, DRIVE OR SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL INFLUENCE. ON BALANCE, AS REFLECTED AT CHANDIGARH (NEW DELHI 308), THERE ARE STILL NO GOOD INDICATIONS THAT MRS GANDHI AND HER ADVISORS ARE SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATING REBUILDING THE CONGRESS PARTY INTO A USEFUL POLITICAL OR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION TOOL. NOR ARE WE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THE SPECULATION THAT THE CHANGES ARE RELATED TO PLANS FOR ELECTIONS. RATHER WE SUSPECT FAR PETTIER AND TRIVIAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WERE INVOLVED IN THE PERSONNEL SHIFTS, WHOSE SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN THE INDIFFERENT QUALITY OF THOSE CHOSEN RATHER THAN THEIR NAMES.
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